

Peace Lutheran Church

Special Council Meeting – March 24, 2020

Present via Zoom: Pastor Kim, Doug Price, Chris Engel, Elizabeth Stevens, Pastor Chris, Jon Williams, Jennie Carter, ElizaBeth McCay, Shannon Hofer, Crystal Pariseau, Russ Strait, Sue Mueller

Opened in Prayer

This meeting was called to discuss and plan for operations that are being affected by the COVID-19 virus pandemic.

1. Worship:

Our church is currently closed to all groups and operations until May 17, 2020, as per recommendations from the Bishop and VA Synod. Pastor Kim started Facebook Live worship on Sunday, March 22, 10am; there will also be Wednesday 7pm virtual worship services throughout Lent and into Holy Week. For those who do not do Facebook or prefer to worship another time, Teresa is putting the videos on our website to view anytime.

We discussed the pros and cons of other platforms, such as Zoom, for worship. It was decided that we will continue to use Facebook for Sunday services and try Zoom for Wednesday evening services. Pastor Chris, at Cross and Crown, is taping her service on Saturday using Zoom and airing it on YouTube on Sunday morning; she has five different church members each week participating in service (appropriately distanced) in order to keep the community present to each other. In an area where internet is not always reliable, taping allows for a reliable presentation on Sunday. They also do a virtual coffee hour after Sunday service, via Zoom.

We discussed calling church members to make sur they are able to access services and what we can do for them if they are not.

2. Finance:

Chris updated us. For March, where we had two Sunday services prior to shut-down, we have an income from offering of \$19K (\$12K from offering plate, \$7K from online giving); our monthly budget calls for \$24K, so we are hopeful that we will reach that with 5 Sundays this month. Online giving is slightly up this month.

Chris had more discussions with our mortgage lender, Mission Investment Fund (MIF) about our options if we are unable to make payments. When he called, they were still trying to figure out a plan, but said they were going to try to help everyone. More info to come. Chris did call them recently to inquire about refinancing, and we are already at a low rate, 3.6%, so at the time it did not make sense to make changes; he will monitor and make recommendations to council if the interest rate drops enough to consider refinancing.

Shannon reported that he is having a hard time getting counters due to the virus. There are a few checks being mailed into the church from members, so these need to be counted. Sue offered to help.

It was noted that in January, about 75% of offerings came from the offering plate and 25% came via online giving. We would like to see more online giving, especially now. It was recommended that we add instructions to the e-zine to supplement info for giving online, with how to give with a check or bank Bill Pay. We could send letters to those who get a printed copy of the e-zine. Pastor Chris is using Tithely as an online giving platform.

3. Outreach:

Jennie reported on the Hungry Hearts backpack food program. We have gone from providing food for seven families to seventeen families, and more are asking. They have had a tremendous response from the neighboring community in volunteers and donations of money and food. 1361 flyers were sent out to the Forest Lakes/Hollymead neighborhoods recently, asking for food donations, and curbside pick-ups are occurring. A large monetary donation was given to provide for two weeks of food; unfortunately, it has been more difficult to obtain some food at the stores due to shortages. We discussed ways to thank those who have helped.

Pastor Kim and John Voight discussed a summer block party for the neighborhood. This could also be a way to thank those who helped Hungry Hearts.

Sue reported that the PACEM women's shelter moved out of church early due to the virus. It was a stress-filled five days, but the shelter was moved to the Haven, where the women will be stable in one place, and not travelling throughout the community. Members of Peace are still providing dinners each night until our hosting would have ended on the 27th. Thanks to those who are still making and delivering meals to the Haven each night.

Building Peace scheduled for April 19 and May 17 are uncertain. Jennie will call the Synod, who gave us the grant for this program, to see what flexibility we have in using the money for another type of outreach.

Crystal opened discussion about this year's VBS. Does it make sense to do it? We will continue to monitor the status of things and decide soon, as supplies would need to be ordered. We, again, discussed a big neighborhood summer block party as an alternative this year.

4. Community

We discussed calling all church members to check in with them: how are they doing, do they need anything, have they been able to access online worship, would they like other resources, do they have any questions or ideas? And pray with them. Pastor Chris would like to be involved with this as a way to get in touch with members. We will split up the membership roster, plus regular attendees who may not be members, and start calling soon.

We discussed getting triads/quads started via Zoom. This could be a place to do Bible study, have fellowship, and pray together while social distancing. We could send information to members on how to start on their own or offer a sign-up that someone organizes. More info is needed.

Our Annual Meeting was scheduled for May 17, 2020, but this probably will need to be postponed at least a couple of weeks. We are now planning on returning to services on May 17, so this may be too much for one day. We also may not be wanting to encourage large numbers gathering or taking a vote when many members do not feel comfortable attending.

We will forge ahead in trying to get the annual reports from ministries. Crystal, Doug, and Teresa are gathering past reports for reference, and will contact ministries with a set of questions to address in their report. They will try to stick to the original deadline of April 25 for collecting reports.

5. Church building:

Our church building is closed to all groups and events. The staff occasionally is in the office, but starting to work from home as well. All other activities at the church are discouraged. The Hungry Hearts program is still staged at church, but fewer volunteers are present, keeping distance; families drive up to the church to pick up their food.

We need to close our playground and put signs up. All local school playgrounds are closed, and we should also discourage the sharing of this equipment. The staff will take care of getting signs up.

6. Other:

Pastor Chris reported that her move is on track for April 16-17. She obtained a storage unit, with much difficulty, and she will be moving into her temporary apartment prior to the final move to her house in July. Help will be appreciated. ☺

Closed in prayer